

Constantine Brown:

CIA Due for Some Big Changes

Surveys Show That It Has Many Weaknesses and Congress Evidently Will Attempt to Overhaul It Thoroughly

The Central Intelligence Agency, top organization for gathering and evaluating vital information affecting our national defense, is in for some hard sledding in the 83d Congress.

Some Republican legislators consider that agency as too expensive for the results it has produced. Others have expressed the view that it has become so top heavy and unwieldy that it should be scrapped altogether and replaced by a new organization.

Unofficial surveys show that the CIA has expanded beyond the purposes for which it was established. In this rapid expansion it frequently has employed inexperienced personnel which includes a number of bad security risks. The director of the agency, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, himself, had to admit last October that this was the case.

The CIA is responsible directly to the President of the United States. Its director is appointed for a term of five years subject to Senate confirmation. But so far none of its chiefs has served that term. In six years it has had four different directors and this may account for its hit-and-miss policies.

Rear Admiral Sidney Souers, a reserve officer who served in the naval intelligence during the war, was its first director. He had a "nose" for intelligence. But a few months after he established the new organization he left the service to become executive secretary of the National Security Council.

The successor, Gen. Hoyt

Vandenberg, a brilliant air combat officer, had had only a very slight experience as chief of the Army Intelligence in the months following V-J day. He accepted the job at CIA at President Truman's request. Because of Vandenberg's lack of experience in such complicated matters as gathering, evaluating and diffusing intelligence he made little progress in that organization. But he contributed to its mushrooming by insisting that the tried and experienced FBI agents who had been entrusted with the job in South America during the war be replaced by his young and inexperienced men of the CIA.

When the job of chief of staff of the Air Force became available, Gen. Vandenberg accepted it and was replaced by Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter who had some intelligence experience and attempted to streamline his organization in keeping with the spirit and letter of the law. He remained as director for nearly three years. Admiral Hillenkoetter's main deficiency was that he had no political "surface" like his two predecessors. He eventually stubbed his toe on a political rock when he involuntarily put Secretaries Dean Acheson and Louis Johnson on the spot with the Senate Appropriations Committee. In August, 1950, when these two cabinet officers appeared before that committee they were asked why they had been caught napping on the Korean affair. Both replied that the question should be directed to the chief of the CIA.

Admiral Hillenkoetter was

sent for and he presented documentation showing that he had kept the President and the State and Defense Departments sufficiently abreast of the North Koreans' preparations for the officials to have shown greater vigilance.

Admiral Hillenkoetter received warm congratulations from the Senators and incurred the enmity of the two Secretaries. Within four weeks he was sent to sea and replaced by Gen. Bedell Smith, who is expected to relinquish his position soon after January 20.

The lack of continuity of direction is one of the handicaps from which the very costly CIA is suffering. While originally it was designed as an agency to evaluate intelligence gathered by the armed services and the State Department, it eventually extended its operations to intelligence gathering of its own all over the globe.

Moreover, the CIA established an intelligence service in the United States — and this is definitely contrary to law. And while, as in the case of the Office of Strategic Services during the war, some good comes from its agents abroad, it cannot be said that today the CIA serves its purposes or can justify the hundreds of millions which have been spent on its operations.

There is no question that intelligence these days is vitally important to the country's security. But the new Congress feels strongly that the CIA must be thoroughly overhauled and possibly start all over from scratch.

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Times-Herald _____
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